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GOVT POSTPONES NEET, JEE-MAINS AS COVID-19 CASES RISE

The Union HRD Ministry on Friday postponed medical and engineering entrance exams NEET and JEE to September in view of the spike in Covid-19 cases. "The JEE-Mains will be held on September 1-6, while the JEE-advanced exam will be held on September 27. NEET examination will be held on September 13," said Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nihank'.

MODI PUTS CHINA ON NOTICE

Says the era of expansionism is over and the age of development has begun; praises troops for showing their 'fire and fury'; foreign secretary briefs five countries on the LAC situation

MAYANK SINGH & PUSHPAK BANAKAR @ New Delhi

SENDING out a strong signal to China, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that the days of expansionism were over and that India's commitment to peace should not be interpreted by any country as a sign of weakness.

"The era of expansionism has come to an end. This is the era of development. History has proved that expansionist forces have either lost or were forced to turn back," he said, while addressing troops during a surprise visit to Nimu in Ladakh.

Paying tribute to the courage and devotion of Indian soldiers, Modi said, "The enemies of India have seen the fire and fury of our forces." The world had taken note of India's strength and the exemplary bravery of the Armed Forces, the Prime Minister said.

Although he did not mention China even once in his address, it was clear he was referring to India's northern neighbour. Reacting to Modi's speech, the Chinese embassy here said that it was wrong to view China as expansionist and to fabricate its disputes with its neighbours.

"China has demarcated boundary with 12 of its 14 neighbouring countries through peaceful negotiations, turning land borders into



Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledges the greetings of soldiers at a forward location in Ladakh's Nimu on Friday | **PTI**

Modernisation of armed forces a priority: Modi

Speaking to soldiers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said modernisation of the Armed Forces is a priority. "India manufactures modern weapons today. We are bringing modern technology from around the world," he said.

Japan throws its weight behind India

Japan on Friday extended support to India over its border stand-off with China. "Japan opposes any unilateral attempts to change the status quo," said Japanese Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki on Friday.

Miffed China says don't complicate matters

Reacting to Modi's visit, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said that India and China are in touch via military and diplomatic channels and "neither side should make any move that may complicate the border situation".

bonds of friendly cooperation. It's groundless to view China as 'expansionist', exaggerate and fabricate its disputes with neighbours," tweeted Ji Rong, the Chinese embassy spokesperson.

The PM's visit came on a day when India also reached out diplomatically to the US, Germany, France, Russia and Japan. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla briefed the countries on the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"Had a good talk with FS Shringla. Appreciated his briefing on the situation along LAC, including GOI's policy to pursue peaceful resolution. Japan

also hopes for peaceful resolution through dialogues. Japan opposes any unilateral attempts to change the status quo," Japanese Ambassador to India Satoshi Suzuki tweeted.

During his interaction with the troops, the Prime Minister spoke at length about how the virtues of peace, friendship and courage have been a part of India's culture. India has always given a befitting reply to anyone who has tried to disturb peace, he noted.

"India is stronger today, be it in Naval might, Air power, space power or the strength of our Army. Modernisation of weapons and upgradation of infrastructure has enhanced

our defence capabilities multi-fold," Modi said, adding that India's spending on border infrastructure has been enhanced three times.

The Prime Minister also visited the military hospital in Leh and interacted with soldiers who were injured during the border clash with China on June 15.

Modi was accompanied by Chief of the Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and Army Chief Gen M M Naravane. **P7**

FRESH CASES	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
1,694	19,710	293

Now, home isolation for asymptomatic patients

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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TWEAKING its strategy in tackling Covid-19, the State Government on Friday announced that henceforth, asymptomatic patients and people with mild symptoms who are aged below 50, but with no comorbidities, will be kept under home isolation. Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar told reporters on Friday after a Covid task force meeting that fresh guidelines have been issued in this regard.

"Those aged below 50, are asymptomatic and have oxygen saturation above 95% will be placed under home isolation. Those aged over 50, or with comorbidities, will be placed in Covid care centres irrespective of whether they are asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic."

Patients with moderate symptoms and aged below 50 will also be in Covid care centres. Only those with serious symptoms and oxygen saturation below 90% will be in hospitals," he explained.

As per the new guidelines, the patient should report every day to the physician or health authorities and have a pulse oximeter, digital thermometer and PPE. A caregiver should be available 24/7, with regular communication links between the caregiver and hospital. An e-tag band will be put on the left wrist to alert authorities about violation of home isolation.

The health staff will assess health factors using thermal scanner for fever, pulse oximetry for oxygen saturation levels, glucometer for random blood sugar and BP apparatus for recording blood pressure. **P5**

EXPRESS READ

8 UP cops killed during raid to nab criminal

Kanpur: Eight police personnel, including a DSP, were gunned down in a village near here by the henchmen of a criminal who lost two of them in a firefight later, officials said on Friday. Seven others, including a civilian, were injured in the attack from a rooftop on a police team, which had entered Bikru village past Thursday midnight to arrest Vikas Dubey, a history-sheeter who faces about 60 criminal cases. The attackers fled, snatching weapons from the dead and the wounded policemen. **P6**

ICMR pushes the vaccine envelope, singed

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

AIMING to expedite human trials of India's first Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed by Bharat Biotech, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) wrote to 12 hospitals across 10 states selected for the task, but its stern tone and tight timeline led to an uproar.

The ICMR sought to set the clock for the launch of the vaccine for public use by August 15, which was surprising since its human trial hasn't even begun. Jumping the gun by assuming success doesn't befit a research organisation of such repute, experts opined.

ICMR chief Dr Balram Bhargava's July 2 letter directed enrolment of volunteers for trials in five days flat — by July 7.

Also, some of the chosen hospitals are small setups with no established track record of major research. "I don't know how it is possible to launch a vaccine in little over a month which has not even entered Phase 1 and 2 trials," said Anant Bhan, a specialist in global health and bioethics. "Also, I think that many sites chosen for the project won't even have ethics committees approved by the drug regulator and have no prior experience of carrying out a clinical trial for vaccines."

For faster trials, nearly 1,300 patients will be enrolled in AIIMS alone, sources said, though early human trials are done with much smaller numbers. **CONTINUED ON: P7**



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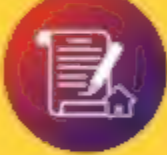
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